

Soviet Apartheid: Stalin's Ethnic Deportations, Special Settlement Restrictions, and the Labor Army: The Case of the Ethnic Germans in the USSR

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Abstract This article examines the Stalin regime's treatment of the ethnic Germans in the USSR during the 1940s as a case study in racial discrimination. After 1938, Soviet definitions of nationality became racialized. Systematic repression against certain nationalities in the USSR after this time clearly fit the definition of racial discrimination formulated by scholars in the post-war era. This article examines the separate and unequal institutions of the special settlement regime and labor army imposed upon the ethnic Germans in the USSR during World War II in the context of race as a category constructed along lines of primordial and essentialist views of culture. It also compares the construction of racialized groups and the practice of racial discrimination in the USSR with South Africa during the apartheid era.

Keywords Ethnic Germans · Deportation · Racism · Special settlers · Labor army

Introduction

Formally Soviet citizens are not restricted by law in their right to choose their place of residence on account of nationality or religious identification. In fact there exists apartheid on the basis of nationality, and also religion applied not only in relation to Meskhetians, but also in relation to Crimean Tatars, Germans, a part of the Koreans, western Ukrainians and Lithuanians, in relation to members of many religious sects, former political prisoners and others (Moscow Helsinki Group 1977, pp. 21–3).

The last Soviet law openly restricting the rights of Soviet citizens to choose their place of residence because of their nationality was repealed only on 3 November 1972 (Auman and Chebotareva 1993, p. 179). The repeal of this restriction gave Soviet citizens descended of German immigrants to the Russian Empire the formal right to choose their place of residence, a right the Stalin regime had arbitrarily

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stripped from them in 1941. In that year, the Soviet government had violently dispersed them from their homelands in the European areas of the USSR to Kazakhstan and Siberia and instituted a series of restrictions upon them similar to the apartheid laws later imposed upon blacks in South Africa.

The mass deportation of ethnic Germans from European areas of the USSR to Siberia and Kazakhstan in fall 1941 marked the beginning of several decades of severe legal restrictions on this population. This was followed by the deportation of the Karachais and Kalmyks in 1943 and Chechens, Ingush, Balkars, and Crimean Tatars in 1944. All of which had their own national territories in the USSR at the Autonomous Oblast or ASSR level. This mass uprooting of people based upon their ethnic ancestry resulted in mass human suffering. They lost much of their property, their homelands and hundreds of thousands of lives. The best estimate on the excess mortality resulting from the deportations and exile comes from D.M. Ediev. He calculates that the above listed groups suffered over 442,000 excess deaths as a result of this repression or more than 21% of their population. Ethnic Germans constituted over 228,000 of these deaths or more than 19% of their population (Ediev 2003, p. 294). Largely ignored outside the Soviet Union at the time of its commission, these crimes also involved the creation of a sophisticated system of racialized discrimination against these ethnic groups.

Racial Discrimination

Racial discrimination is first and foremost a practice of denying groups of people defined on the basis of their ancestry rights, resources, power, and privileges in relation to other similarly defined groups rather than any particular theory used to justify this unequal treatment. Racism involves the classification of people into immutable groups defined by descent and the ascription of generalized and inherent negative traits to the members of these groups. These negative traits are then used as the justification for the differential treatment of these groups. States perpetrating racist policies do not need to articulate the reasons for this discrimination on the basis of the supposed existence of biological races. While racism requires classifying people according to their ancestry it does not necessarily need to make any reference to biology or genetics. Sociological categories such as ethnicity or nationality can also serve this purpose (Balibar 1991, pp. 17–21). Any classification, whose membership is defined at birth by ancestry, cannot be left through assimilation into another group and is passed on automatically to the next generation is indistinguishable from race in its legal, political, and social functions (Weitz 2002a, p. 7).

Ethnicity is frequently used as a substitute for the term race. The classification often does much of the work of race without the appeal to biological pseudoscience (Malik 1996, p. 176). If an ethnic category is constructed in such a way as to preclude any voluntary aspects regarding its membership and the possibility of assimilation into other groups then it does not function differently from a racial classification. Immutable ethnic categories assigned by the state to people at birth are really just racial categories under another name. Social-cultural factors such as define ethnicity or nationality rather than biology have frequently been the ideological foundation of racial categorization and discrimination. This is most apparent in the ideological justification for apartheid in South Africa after 1948 (Ross 1999, p. 116 and Dubnow,

pp. 246–7 and pp. 277–290). The treatment of the deported peoples by the Soviet state meets all the requirements of racial discrimination.

The Stalin regime imposed a separate legal and administrative system upon the ethnic Germans in the USSR and other deported nationalities which kept them both physically and socially segregated from the mainstream of Soviet society. The deportees came under the control of a network of special commandants of the NKVD (People's Commissariat or Internal Affairs) and later MVD (Ministry of Internal Affairs). Known as the 'special settlement regime', this administration imposed a series of restrictions upon the residency, movement, employment, education, and other rights of the ethnic Germans and other deported peoples. This systematic discrimination against certain defined ethnic groups has clear parallels with other systems of racial discrimination such as South African apartheid.

The similarities between Soviet treatment of the various deported peoples and South African apartheid are significant and stem from policies aimed at confining certain racialized groups to less desirable areas of the country, restricting their movement and using them as a source of menial labor. In particular the Stalin regime greatly restricted the right of special settlers to choose their place of residency as well as move from their assigned places of settlement even for short distances. The Soviet government confined the national deportees to the most remote and desolate areas of the USSR and completely excluded them from living in the European areas of the USSR and large cities. They had to carry special passes noting their status as stigmatized ethnicities with limited civil rights. The Soviet authorities used these passes to control their residency, employment, and most importantly, their movement (Nekrich 1978, p. 119). The Group Areas Act of 1950 segregated residences in South Africa by race, restricting where blacks, coloureds, and Indians could live. Like the Soviet special settlement regime this physical segregation of living areas required the deportation of millions of people. From 1960 to 1983, the South African government relocated 3.5 million blacks onto Bantustans. These areas like the destinations of Soviet national deportees often had inadequate resources to support the deportees (Worden 2000, p. 126). This resulted in excessively high rates of infant mortality, general morbidity and short life expectancies (Thompson 2001, pp. 202–4). In 1952, the South African government introduced a comprehensive pass system that resembled the special permits imposed upon ethnic deportees living under special settlement restrictions (Worden 2000, p. 110). The most important similarity, however, was that these legal disabilities were imposed upon groups based upon their ancestral affiliation with particular ethnic and cultural groups. Both the Soviets and South Africans defined their population in terms of racialized groups defined not by genetics or biology like the Nazis, but rather according to primordial ethnicity and cultural essentialism (Tishkov 1997, pp. 1–5 and Dubnow 1995, pp. 277–290).

Ethnicity and Race in the USSR

Nationality (*natsional'nost*) in the USSR initially roughly corresponded to the Anglo-American concept of ethnicity. That is it officially defined a group of people sharing a common culture and heritage. In the Soviet Union, the state viewed language as the primary marker of these cultural groups.

The Soviet government constructed a racial system by creating a system legally defining each Soviet citizen by their *natsional'nost* and then racializing this category. The category of *natsional'nost* was considered by the Soviet authorities and Soviet scholars to be primordial (Tishkov 1997, pp. 1–4). That is ethnicities were permanent and largely impermeable groups whose membership was determined by birth not voluntary association. This meant that ethnicity in the USSR possessed many of the features associated with race already in the 1920s. According to the Soviet view ‘ethnoses are ancient, self-contained bodies making their own journeys through history. In this case, ethnicity is natural, innate and inescapable.’ (Tishkov 1997, p. 3). The ability of the Soviet government to decree entire groups of people subject to repression on the basis of their birth into hereditary categories had already been demonstrated in 1919 with the Decossakization campaign in the Don region during the Civil War (Holquist 1997). Moving from this position to one of racial discrimination against groups defined by nationality did not require much effort.

In the 1930s and 1940s on the basis of this primordialist view of ethnicity the Stalin regime constructed a racial hierarchy in the USSR permanently stigmatizing certain small nationalities as inherently treasonous. On 2 April 1938, the NKVD decreed that individuals automatically acquired the nationality of their parents and that this classification could not be changed (Martin 2001, p. 451). By making nationality inherited at birth and immutable, the Soviet government transformed nationality from an ethnic classification into a racial one (Weitz 2002a, pp. 7–17). From this time on *natsional'nost* as listed on line five of Soviet passports became a racial category based upon biological descent (Mogil'ner 2008, p. 494). In the case of mixed marriages, the offspring were required to choose the nationality of one of the parents at age 16 (Karklins 1986, p. 32). Previously individuals could choose the nationality they wished to have marked on their identification documents. Nationality now no longer referred to belonging to a particular culture as defined by language. Instead it referred to being descended from ancestors belonging to a particular linguistic community. No amount of acculturation could result in legal assimilation.

Western Scholars on Racism in the USSR

Very little has actually been written on racial discrimination against the deported peoples in the USSR. Almost never do terms such as race, racism, racialization, or racial discrimination appear in the literature on Soviet ethnicity and nationality. One of the few exceptions has been Eric D. Weitz. He argued in a 2002 article that appeared as part of a special topic issue on the subject in *Slavic Review* that the Stalin regime had racialized the deported peoples particularly in the 26 November 1948 decree by the Presidium of the Supreme Soviet making their deportation permanent (Weitz 2002a, p. 15). The previous changeable ethnic and national classification of these groups by the government had been hardened during the 1930s and 1940s into a racial one. He distinguished race from ethnicity and nationality by the fact that race was permanent and indelible. Individuals were born into the category by virtue of their ancestry, could not change it during their lifetime through assimilation or other means, and automatically passed it on to their children. The Soviet practice of racial discrimination was aimed at groups defined as having primordial cultural essences marking them as inherently alien or politically hostile. These essences could not be

escaped no matter how many generations had completely assimilated into Russian culture. It thus differed from the Nazi practice of defining groups as being inferior or alien by virtue of genetics and physical biology rather than ancestral ethnic culture (Weitz 2002a). In practice the Soviet treatment of the deported peoples shared basic similarities with racial discrimination in a number of other countries such as South Africa.

In the same issue of *Slavic Review* Amir Weiner and Francine Hirsch both very strongly opposed Weitz's suggestion that the Soviet government under Stalin had racialized the deported peoples. Instead they argued that since the Soviet government used the terms *natsional'nost* and *narodnost* (peoplehood) rather than race and did not define the targeted groups as biologically inferior peoples similar to the Nazi perception of Jews that the terms race and racism were completely inapplicable to the USSR (Hirsch 2002, pp. 30–43 and Weiner 2002, pp. 44–53). They defined race in purely genetic terms and denied that race could be constructed along cultural lines (Hirsch 2002, pp. 31–32 and Weiner 2002, pp. 46–47). They then claimed from this pretense that Stalin's deportation of whole nationalities did not constitute acts of racial discrimination.

Hirsch and Weiner emphasized that the terms *natsional'nost* and *narodnost* referred to groups that were constructed historically and culturally rather than on the basis of genetics (Hirsch 2002 and Weiner 2002). Their argument ignored two important points. As already discussed cultural categories such as ethnicity and nationality can do the exact same work in racializing a group that biological ones can (Balibar 1991, pp. 17–21). Second the terms ethnicity and nationality can in fact be 'official code' to avoid the term race, a fact recognized by the 1965 International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination and subsequently upheld in later international law (Tilley et al. 2009, pp. 153–154). A very few scholars have noted that the position taken by Hirsch and Weiner that racial discrimination by the Soviet government did not exist because the official categories were *natsional'nost* and *narodnost* not 'race' ignores actual Soviet practices (Fikes and Lemon 2002, p. 515).

Race in South Africa

The Soviet Union was hardly unique in racializing groups on the basis of history and culture rather than genetics. In the case of South Africa, the official discourse racializing different groups of people almost never mentioned genetics and centered around ideas of history, culture, ethnicity, and other supposedly non-biological signifiers of difference (Fredrickson 2000, p. 81). The South African government almost never defined its black population in terms of biologically or genetically based races either, but rather in terms of ethnicity and nationality (Dubnow 1995, pp. 277–290). The South Africans made reference to the same type of arguments that the Soviets did in describing the differences between various peoples in their multi-ethnic state.

South African racial discrimination was generally justified in terms of culture, 'For pragmatic as well as doctrinal reasons, the diffuse language of cultural essentialism was preferred to the crude scientific racism drawn from the vocabulary of social Darwinism.' (Dubnow 1995, p. 246). The apartheid regime found that 'Volk and culture functioned as a useful substitute for a biological view of race.' (Dubnow

1995, p. 283). Apartheid was justified with sociological arguments not biological ones (Dubnow 1995, p. 279). Indeed South Africa's leaders claimed that the reason for the differential treatment of blacks and whites was due to cultural not biological differences between the two groups (Dubnow 1995, p. 288). Their argumentation and rationale was very similar to that used by the Soviet Union to divide its population into various nationalities and used a similar primordial understanding of ethnicity to make these divisions (Tilley et al. 2009, p. 155).

In both the USSR and South Africa these primordial ethnic categories did the same work as biological racial classifications despite being based upon culture rather than genetics. They did this work in two ways. First, they merely substituted different terms for the word race. Second, they served as a code. Everybody understood that these terms referred to racialized groups. In South Africa, the real meaning of phrases like 'national and cultural identity' was obvious (Dubnow 1995, p. 283). But, in the USSR the vast underground of racist jokes, anecdotes, insults and even violence aimed at racialized groups also drew their strength from the official Soviet discourse (Mogil'ner 2008, p. 495 and Fikes and Lemon 2002, p. 515). *Natsional'nost* served the same social functions in the USSR as the term race.

Racial Discrimination and State Security

Another similarity between the Soviet and South African construction of racism is their reliance upon the claim that the stigmatized groups represented a perceived threat to state security. Weiner, Hirsch, and other scholars claim that legitimate security threats faced by the USSR during World War II and the alleged wartime conduct of these nationalities differentiated its discrimination against ethnic minorities from other cases and it made it political not racial (Hirsch 2002, p. 37 and Weiner 2002, p. 46). For Hirsch this is based solely upon not what the ethnic Germans in the USSR themselves did, but propaganda claims made by the Nazi regime in Berlin. However, the Stalin regime had already culled through the Volga German population between 22 June and 10 August 1941. During this time out of a population of over 366,000 people the NKVD found 145 people of dubious loyalty of which it only accused two of being spies (Isakov 1990, p. 38). The Soviet government thus was well aware before the deportations that there was no real security threat from the Volga Germans, but ordered their deportation anyways. The first deportation decree on 26 August 1941 makes no mention of the reasons for the deportation (Bugai 1998, pp. 19–22). The charges of mass treason were only made 2 days later on 28 August 1941 (Bugai 1992, pp. 37–8). This falls in line with later national deportations such as the Balkars where the decision to deport the entire nationality was made first and the charges of mass treason later crafted to justify the action (Ediev 2003, p. 27). The use of security justifications to discriminate against racialized groups, however, was not unique to the USSR.

Many of South Africa's apartheid laws were crafted specifically as security measures to protect the state from subversion. In fact security legislation along with classifying the population by 'race' (population registration act) and segregating them into different areas of the country (Group Areas Act) formed the third pillar of apartheid in South Africa (Tilley et al. 2009, pp. 20–1). The South African government instituted a wide variety of laws intended to maintain the apartheid system by

suppressing political opposition to the system. Most of these laws made no reference to race or even ethnicity, but were clearly designed to restrict the freedom of expression and association of the native population in practice. These laws included the Suppression of Communism Act of 1950, the Riotous Assemblies Act of 1956, the Unlawful Organization Act of 1960, the Sabotage Act of 1962, the Publications and Entertainment Act of 1963, the Terrorism Act of 1967, and the Internal Security Act of 1976 all of which were justified in terms of the security needs of the state, not on the need to exclude biologically inferior races (Jabbour 1970, pp. 67–9; Tilley et al. 2009, p. 170; Thompson 2001, pp. 198–9). Security justifications played a key role in South Africa's system of racial discrimination.

The Evolution of Racial Discrimination in the USSR

The Soviet policy of racial persecution of certain groups evolved over time. At first the Stalin regime focused on diaspora groups. The various diaspora groups in the USSR such as ethnic Germans, Poles, Latvians, Finns, Estonians, Greeks, Koreans, and others became subject to severe repression during 1937–1938. It was during these years that the Soviet category of *natsional'nost* became hardened from an ethnic one into a racial one. This change occurred initially to prevent people of German and Polish descent from avoiding persecution during the national operations by changing their *natsional'nost* to Russian, Belorussian, or Ukrainian (Martin 2001, p. 451). As part of the Great Terror, the NKVD launched a series of national operations aimed at eliminating spies from particular countries. These operations fell particularly hard upon Soviet citizens who were members of extraterritorial nationalities with an ancestral or cultural connection to the foreign states named in the various operations. Thus ethnic Germans and Poles found themselves arrested, convicted, and executed for being German and Polish spies at much higher rates than other Soviet citizens (Martin 2001, pp. 338–343).

The Stalinist attempt to neutralize diaspora groups as potential supporters of foreign intelligence services and militaries led to their wholesale ethnic cleansing from 1937 to 1949. The regime had constructed the USSR as a collection of primordial national territories. This primordialism linked each nationality and all of its history, culture, and ethnic essence to a particular piece of land and state structure for all eternity (Martin 2001 and Tishkov 1997). This linkage left no place in the USSR for diaspora nationalities. The Soviet government believed that their historical culture, national identity, and political loyalty remained outside the USSR and its predecessor, the Russian Empire (Hirsch 2002, p. 38). It thus deemed it necessary to physically disperse these nationalities across remote areas of the USSR and severely restrict their ability to move around freely.

The Koreans were the first diaspora group to be racialized as an enemy nationality and deported in their entirety. The Stalin regime deported the Koreans from the Russian Far East in 1937. The NKVD placed the Koreans under administrative exile in Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan rather than special settlement restrictions (Bugai 1992, p. 22–3 and Pak and Bugai 2004, pp. 248–51). They followed this up with the deportation of the Germans and Finns in 1941 and later the Greeks and Meskhetian Turks during the years 1944–1949 (Bugai 1992, p. 285). The Soviet government ascribed a generalized and innate political disloyalty to these groups based upon their ethnic ancestry.

The second group of nationalities subject to wholesale deportation and special settlement restrictions consisted of those nationalities native to the USSR that had historically resisted Russian and Soviet rule. These nationalities consisted of the Karachais, Kalmyks, Chechens, Ingush, Balkars, and Crimean Tatars (Bugai 1992, p. 285). The participation of some members of these nationalities in resisting Tsarist and Soviet policies marked them in the eyes of the Stalin regime as disloyal. The actions of some of them during World War II in participating in anti-Soviet uprisings or German sponsored military units became the final factor in the Stalin regime's decision to brand each and every member of these nationalities as traitors. The charge even extended to loyal members of the Communist Party and heroes in the Red Army (Bugai 1992, pp. 41–3).

This article will use the ethnic Germans as its primary case study for examining the issue of racial discrimination in the USSR. The ethnic Germans constituted the largest number of national deportees and special settlers under the Stalin regime. The ethnic Germans also constituted along with the Crimean Tatars and Meskhetian Turks one of the three deported nationalities not allowed to return to their previous homelands in the USSR during the Khrushchev era (Polian 2004, p. 201). They thus suffered from official Soviet discrimination longer than most deported nationalities.

The Deportations

The Soviet deportation of the ethnic Germans and other nationalities possessed a racial coloring. The Stalin regime punitively resettled each and every member of these nationalities on the basis that their common ancestry dictated certain political outlooks and activities (Weitz 2002b, p. 64). After the ethnic Germans the second wave of deportations took place in 1943–1944. This later ethnic cleansing targeted the Karachais, Kalmyks, Chechens, Ingush, Balkars, Crimean Tatars, and Meskhetian Turks. The deportation orders inevitably specified that ‘all’ members of a given nationality had to be removed from their homelands or other areas of settlement and exiled to remote areas of the Soviet Union. The experiences of these smaller groups in being uprooted from their homelands and forcibly resettled in Siberia, Kazakhstan, and Central Asia closely resembled the earlier dispersal of the ethnic Germans in the USSR. These similarities are a direct result of each mass deportation serving as a model for subsequent acts of ethnic cleansing.

The 28 August 1941, decree of the Presidium of the Supreme Soviet ‘On resettling Germans, living in districts of the Volga,’ states that the regime ‘deemed it necessary to resettle *all* the German population, living in districts of the Volga’ in order to prevent diversionist attacks in the region (Berdinskikh 2005, p. 311, emphasis added.). It further noted that the ‘State Committee of Defense orders the immediate undertaking of the resettlement of *all* Germans in the Volga’ (Berdinskikh 2005, p. 311 emphasis added). The decree made no exceptions for proven political loyalty. The NKVD instructions for the deportation of the Volga Germans made explicit mention that members of the Communist Party, *Komsomol* (Communist Youth League), and the families of Red Army men fighting at the front were all to be deported to Kazakhstan and Siberia (Berdinskikh 2005, p. 313). The only exemptions granted from deportation were in cases where the male head of the family was a non-German man married to a German woman. In such cases, the family was spared deportation (Berdinskikh

2005, p. 314). This exemption was also extended to other German groups subject to deportation (Bugai 1998, pp. 28–9). However, only about a thousand Volga German women avoided deportation in 1941 by virtue of being married to a Russian husband (Bugai 1992, p. 166). The Stalin regime aimed at the total ethnic excision of the Germans from the Volga region and other European areas of the Soviet Union where they had lived since 1764.

During the fall of 1941, the Stalin regime systematically deported the vast majority of the ethnic German population from European areas of the USSR to Kazakhstan and Siberia. Apparently the Soviet government also deported a smaller number of ethnic Germans living in Belorussia to Uzbekistan as special settlers to work on cotton farms (Interview with Gerzekorn in Kant on 14 November 2010). By 1 January 1942, the NKVD had ethnically cleansed a recorded 799,459 ethnic Germans from western regions of the USSR (Bugai 1992, p. 75). The dispersal of the ethnic Germans across Kazakhstan and Siberia physically confined them to areas distant from their traditional homes and the main population centers of the USSR. It also greatly reduced the number of ethnic Germans in the USSR living in urban areas. Before 1941, about 20% of the ethnic German population of the USSR inhabited cities (Krieger 2006a, p. 214). The deportations almost completely removed the ethnic German population from urban areas of the USSR. The NKVD resettled 90% of the 77,359 ethnic Germans deported from cities on *kolkhozes* (Tsarevskaja-Diakina 2004, p. 326). The deportations thus confined the ethnic Germans to rural areas of Soviet Asia.

In the eastern regions of the USSR, the Stalin regime also banned the ethnic Germans from a number of urban settlements. Between October 1941 and January 1942, the Soviet government expelled all ethnic Germans from the capitals and oblast centers of Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan, the oblast centers and industrial zones of Molotov (Perm), Chelyabinsk, Sverdlovsk, Chkalov (Orenburg), and the border region of Chita (Krieger 2004, pp. 99–100; Krieger 2008a, pp. 111–113). This forced settlement of ethnic Germans onto *kolkhozes* and *sovkhozes* resulted in the occupational as well as physical segregation of the population. The regime forced urban professionals with no experience in agricultural work to perform menial farm work in order to eke out a bare subsistence (Krieger 2004, p. 100).

The Special Settlement Regime

The Stalin regime imposed a series of legal restrictions known as the special settlement regime upon the ethnic Germans and other nationalities deported to Kazakhstan, Central Asia, and Siberia during World War II. Already on 28 August 1941, NKVD chief Lavrenti Beria issued Prikaz 000160 ‘On organizing the special settlement section of the NKVD USSR’ (Bruhl 1995, vol. ii, p. 107). The special settlement section of the NKVD controlled the residency, movement, and employment of the deportees. On 10 January 1942 the NKVD issued instructions for law enforcement officials to prohibit ethnic German deportees from leaving their assigned places of settlement and moving from one *raion* (district) to another (Shadt 2001, p. 293). Subsequent decrees reinforced these restrictions on the special settlers. Prikaz 00127 ‘On introducing effective regulations for *raion* and special commandants of the NKVD’ of 7 February 1944 required the special NKVD commandants to prevent

escapes among special settlers, return fugitives to their settlements, and uncover and arrest anti-Soviet and criminal elements among the deportees (Tsarevskaja-Diakina 2004, pp. 400–403). It also prohibited special settlers from leaving their assigned settlements even for short periods of time without explicit written permission from their designated commandants. Travel passes for special settlers had specified days and itineraries and required NKVD stamps and signatures from both the point of departure and the point of arrival (Eisfeld 2003, p. 87). On 16 August 1944, the NKVD issued new regulations on counting and registering special settlements. The settlers received new identification documents and personnel files marking their restricted legal status. From this point on the NKVD required the special settlers to report to their local commandant's office on a monthly basis (Tsarevskaja-Diakina, pp. 434–438). These legal restrictions on the special settlers derived from their stigmatization as racialized enemy nationalities.

The Soviet government officially codified the legal status of the special settlers only at the beginning of 1945. Prior to this date the collection of decrees mostly by the NKVD governing the special settlers had existed on an ad hoc basis. On 8 January 1945, the SNK (Council of People's Commissars) passed Resolution No. 35, 'On the legal status of special settlers.' This document specified the restrictions placed upon special settlers distinguishing them from other Soviet citizens. In particular article three limited the ability of special settlers to move freely. They could not leave their assigned area of settlement without permission of their designated NKVD special commandant. The regime viewed special settlers leaving the confines of their assigned settlement without such permission as flight and treated it as a criminal manner. Article four required all heads of families or their substitutes to report all births, deaths, flights, and other changes in family composition to their assigned NKVD special commandant within 3 days. Finally, article five required special settlers to observe the established legal regulations and social order of the special settlement regime and to obey all orders from the special commandant of the NKVD. Violations of this final article carried with them a potential administrative punishment of up to a fine of 100 rubles or 5 days in jail (Zemskov 2005, pp. 120–1). This legislation enunciated clear legal distinctions between those nationalities classified as special settlers and the majority of the Soviet population.

Despite regulations meant to prevent unauthorized movement by the special settlers, a number of deportees left their assigned settlements on their own volition in defiance of the Soviet regime. The security organs treated these departures as escapes that were punishable as a criminal matter. By 1 November 1948, the MVD counted 12,496 special settler fugitives at large of which 6,517 were ethnic Germans (Bugai 1992, pp. 246–8). The continued presence of a large number of escapees from the special settlement regime prompted the Stalin regime to impose new draconian restrictions on the special settlers at the end of November 1948.

The Presidium of the Supreme Soviet of the USSR greatly tightened the restrictions on special settlers belonging to nationalities deported in their entirety on 26 November 1948 when it issued a decree titled, 'On the criminal responsibilities for flight from places of obligatory and decreed settlement of people exiled to distant regions of the Soviet Union in the period of the Fatherland War.' This decree declared that Chechens, Karachais, Ingush, Balkars, Kalmyks, Germans, Crimean Tatars, and other nationalities deported during the Second World War were now exiled to these

distant regions ‘forever’ and did not have the right ever to return to their previous places of settlement. The decree went on to establish a 20-year sentence of forced labor for special settlers convicted of attempting to flee from the areas of their obligatory settlement. All such cases were to be tried by special boards of the MVD. It also established a 5-year sentence of imprisonment for free citizens caught assisting fugitive special settlers (Zemskov 2005, p. 160). This decree condemned certain named nationalities to exile both in their entirety and for eternity, a clearly racist policy.

The permanent confinement of all members of the deported nationalities to areas of mandatory settlement far from their native homelands marked the most extreme point in the racialization of Soviet policy under Stalin. It condemned as of yet unborn generations to stigmatization and punishment on the basis of their now racialized nationality (Weitz 2002a, p. 15). The decree is unusual because it is the only one found to date that uses the term ‘navechno’ (forever.) The creation of permanent legal differences between groups on the basis of their ancestry clearly fits most definitions of racial discrimination.

The Labor Army

After the deportations, the Stalin regime forcibly mobilized most of the able bodied adult ethnic German population in the USSR into forced labor columns. They worked at felling trees, constructing industrial factories, building rail roads, mining coal, extracting oil and manufacturing munitions in a vast forced labor system known as the labor army. In total, the NKVD and NKO (People’s Commissariat of Defense) mobilized a recorded 316,600 ethnic Germans into the labor army from 1941 to 1946 (Bugai 1998, p. 11). The ethnic Germans inducted into the labor army and classified as ‘mobilized Germans’ enjoyed even fewer legal rights than those denoted as special settlers.

The Germans were not the only Soviet nationality conscripted into the labor army. But, they were the only one inducted on such a massive scale in terms of percentage of their population. The Soviet government also only conscripted men from nationalities other than the Germans into the labor army. In contrast after October 1942, the Stalin regime inducted ethnic German women as well as men into the labor army. Out of a total population of 400,000 Soviet citizens of suspect nationality condemned to the labor army as many as 350,000 or 87.5% may have been ethnic Germans (Zemskov 2005, p. 95 and Krieger 2006a, p. 216). This represented over a third of the total ethnic German population still under Soviet control in 1942 (Bugai 1998, pp. 251–3). The wide spread conscription into the labor army meant that in some families almost all adult members of German nationality in the USSR ended up in the labor army. For instance Ekaterina Ivanova Voronetskaia recalls that only the Russian members of her family such as her father and herself were not taken into the labor army. Her German mother and all her relatives on her mother’s side ended up in the labor army (Interview with Voronetskaia in Kant on 14 November 2010). The labor army experience affected almost every ethnic German family in the USSR.

The first ethnic Germans sent to labor camps as members of the labor army came from Ukraine. In the wake of the rapid advance by the armed forces of Nazi Germany across Ukraine, the Stalin regime attempted to remove as many able-bodied young

German men from their path as possible. To this end, the Soviet Politburo issued a decree titled, 'On Germans living on the territory of the Ukrainian SSR.' This decree ordered all anti-Soviet elements among the Ukrainian Germans arrested and the mobilization of all remaining able bodied men aged 16 to 60 into construction battalions. This mobilization was to be conducted by the NKO (People's Commissariat of Defense) and the conscripted ethnic Germans were to be transferred to the NKVD for work in eastern regions of the USSR (Berdinskikh 2005, p. 316). By 3 September 1941, the NKVD had received 18,600 ethnic Germans mobilized in Ukraine under this decree. Initially the NKVD organized these men into 13 construction battalions (Bugai 1998, p. 52). Later in the month, the NKVD reorganized these units into labor columns and assigned them to work in GULag camps in the Urals and Kazakhstan along with ethnic German soldiers discharged from the Red Army.

Soon after the NKVD began the mass deportation of civilian ethnic Germans in the Volga and other European regions of the USSR, the *Stavka Verkhovnogo Glavnokomandovaniia* (Headquarters of the Supreme Head Commander of the military) issued Directive No. 35105. Dated 8 September 1941, this order called for the removal of all ethnic Germans from the Red Army and military academies and their transfer to construction battalions in the interior of the USSR (Alieva 1993, vol. i, p. 148). In accordance with this decree, the NKVD initially formed nine such battalions with 3,685 former soldiers in Kirov Oblast, Molotov Oblast and the Udmurt ASSR (German and Kurochkin 1998, p. 49). The ethnic Germans mobilized in Ukraine and those discharged from the military and sent to construction battalions formed the seeds of the labor army.

The removal of ethnic Germans from the Soviet military and their segregation into forced labor detachments continued throughout 1941 and 1942. During the fall of 1941, the Soviet military demobilized almost all ethnic Germans serving in its ranks. Only a few men helped by their superior officers managed to avoid removal from the ranks of the Red Army and Navy at this time (Krieger 2006b, p. 150). One attempt by the Soviet navy to have an ethnic German captain, E.V. Walter, removed from the work columns in the Bogoslov labor camp to continue serving as a specialist in the reserves elicited a particularly clear enunciation of the racial nature of Soviet policies. The GULag administration stated on 5 June 1942 that 'independent of rank in the Red Army, position in the reserves, party membership, election to party and soviet posts etc.—*all Germans*, in accordance with the decree of the State Committee of Defense, are mobilized into work columns for the duration of the war' (Krieger 2006a, p. 116, emphasis added). In total the Soviet military purged over 33,000 ethnic Germans from its ranks during World War II (Berdinskikh, pp. 323–4). Almost all of these men were subsequently drafted into the labor army in 1942 (Krieger 2006b, p. 150).

The mobilization of ethnic Germans from Ukraine and the military into the labor army in 1941 remained small in comparison to those conscripted in 1942. By January 1942, the number of men in the labor army numbered only 20,800 (Bugai 1998, pp. 59–60). After this date, however, the Soviet government transferred almost all able-bodied Russian-German men and women in the USSR into the forced labor detachments of the labor army. The regime condemned these ethnic Germans to labor camps without charge or trial under the pretext of mobilizing them for 'alternative military service.' The NKVD saw this measure as a way to circumvent the Soviet legal system and incorporate them into the labor camp system (Krieger 2006b, p. 150). The Stalin

regime issued GKO (State Defense Committee) order 1123ss on 10 January 1942, 'On the orderly use of German-resettlers between the ages 17 and 50,' ordering the mobilization of 120,000 able-bodied ethnic German men between the ages of 17 and 50 into the labor army to fell trees, build industrial complexes and lay rail lines. This decree only applied to those men who had been deported to Novosibirsk and Omsk oblasts, Krasnoïarsk and Altai kraï, and Kazakhstan. The NKVD mobilized these forced laborers in the same manner as they conscripted men of other nationalities into the Red Army. After calling up the ethnic Germans for labor army service, they handed them over to either the NKVD or in the case of those assigned to railway construction, the NKPS (People's Commissariat of Transportation). The labor army conscripts came under NKVD discipline and received rations according to GULag norms (Bugai 1998, pp. 39–40). The Stalin regime separated the men drafted into the labor army from their wives and families and sent them to labor camps in the Urals where the NKVD isolated them from the rest of Soviet society.

The first mass mobilization of ethnic Germans into the labor army encountered problems in reaching its goal of conscripting 120,000 men. Instead it succeeded in only drafting 67,961 men to work in eleven labor camps in the Urals and Siberia and another 25,000 to work for the NKPS (Bugai 1998, pp. 70–1). It thus quickly became necessary to expand the pool of ethnic Germans eligible for conscription into the labor army. On 14 February 1942, the GKO issued order 1281ss 'On mobilizing Germans—men between the ages of 17 and 50, permanently living in oblasts, kraï, autonomous and union republics.' This decree subjected able bodied ethnic German men between 17 and 50 who had avoided deportation in 1941 because they already lived in eastern areas of the USSR to service in the labor army (Bugai 1998, p. 41). This second draft netted 40,864 men for the labor army (Bugai 1998, pp. 70–1). A third mass induction into the labor army came in fall of 1942. On 7 October 1942, the GKO issued order 2382ss 'On additional mobilization of Germans for the people's economy of the USSR' which extended service in the labor army to men ages 15 to 16 and 51 to 55 and women ages 16 to 45 who were not pregnant and did not have children younger than three (Bugai 1998, pp. 43–4). This mobilization resulted in the conscription of 70,780 men and 52,742 women into the labor army (German and Kurochkin 1998, p. 63). Several smaller induction campaigns during 1943 resulted in an additional 30,000 ethnic Germans working in the labor army (Ibid.). The Soviet government condemned the majority of the adult ethnic German population of the USSR to forced labor in the labor army.

Even though the conscription into the labor army only applied to adult men and women, a large number of minors found themselves living in labor army work sites. In some cases the Stalin regime drafted teenage males younger than 15 to work in the labor army (German and Kurochkin 1998, p. 63). Also many mothers could not find anybody to care for their children. Many of these children ended up living in horrible conditions in the labor army barracks housing their mothers (German and Kurochkin 1998, pp. 120–1). Sometimes other relatives also brought young children with them into the labor army barracks due to an inability to find any other shelter. As a child Margarita Ivanovna Funt lived with her sister in a hostel in Chelyabinsk after her sister was conscripted into the labor army. Her sister, Roza Ivanovna Funt, had taken her to the Urals from Altai rather than leave her alone in the orphanage in Lenino. Their father had been arrested in 1937 never to be heard from again and their mother

died a short time later (Interview with Margarita Ivanova Funt in Kant on 14 November 2010). The presence of children in labor army barracks and hostels was a direct result of the huge number of ethnic German women conscripted into the labor army. Other nationalities did not suffer from this problem.

The legal status of the men and later women conscripted into the labor army deteriorated significantly in early 1942. On 12 January 1942, Beria issued instructions 'On organizing detachments of Germans in camps of the NKVD USSR.' This decree assigned 80,000 ethnic German men to work in eight labor camps and established the basic provisions for their housing, work, discipline and feeding. These forced laborers remained segregated from the convicted prisoners at these camps, but received food and other rations according to the norms set by GULag. They came under strict work discipline for the fulfillment of production quotas. In order to help enforce this discipline the NKVD established a network of secret agents among the mobilized Germans in these camps. Violations of discipline, refusal to work and desertion all came under the jurisdiction of special boards of the NKVD which could impose criminal penalties including execution (Bugai 1998, pp. 62–4). The labor army conscripts came to resemble GULag prisoners in many of their fundamental aspects.

More detailed instructions for handling ethnic Germans mobilized to work in labor camps came from deputy chief of the NKVD, Kruglov. Also on 12 January 1942, he issued 'Regulations on the orderly maintenance, structure, discipline, and work use of resettled Germans mobilized in work columns.' It instructed that the ethnic Germans be housed in barracks and that surrounding the barracks should be established a restricted zone patrolled by armed GULag guards. Twice a day, once in the morning and once in the evening, the labor columns had to undergo a roll call to verify the presence of all conscripts. Any absences triggered immediate searches and investigations by the camp authorities. The work columns tolled under the strict watch of NKVD commandants. These instructions further set the work day at a minimum of 10 h a day with 1 day off every 10 days for a total of 3 days off a month for labor army conscripts (Bugai 1998, pp. 114–117; Triakhov 2005, pp. 141–4). This imposition of GULag discipline and norms upon the ethnic Germans sent to the labor army represented the punishment of hundreds of thousands of people due solely to their ancestral origins.

One of the two primary motivations for mobilizing the ethnic Germans into labor army detachments and shipping them to labor camps in the Urals and elsewhere was to end social tensions between the deportees and the local population (German 2008, p. 169). The authorities feared that the divisions between the extremely impoverished and desperate ethnic Germans and the local population presented a potentially explosive situation. The other reason for drafting the ethnic Germans into the labor army was to use them more fully and rationally as a work force in an economy suffering from a severe lack of manpower due to the war. The formation of ethnic Germans into labor battalions removed them from contact with co-workers and neighbors belonging to different nationalities. NKVD guards and officials became the only non-Germans whom the men and later women conscripted into the labor army encountered during most of their mobilization. The Soviet government strictly enforced this physical and social isolation by harshly punishing free citizens who had unauthorized contact with labor army conscripts. In particular, the regime targeted

Russian women accused of sexual relations with German men in the labor army. Women working as free workers at labor army worksites in such positions as *Komsomol* secretaries and medical personnel found themselves vulnerable to such accusations. They suffered denunciations and punishment for any contact with mobilized Germans outside of the limits of narrowly defined official capacities (Krieger 2004, p. 103). The strict segregation of ethnic Germans in the labor army from people of other nationalities thus emulated other systems of racial exclusion by focusing on the prevention of sexual contact between racially stigmatized men and women belonging to the politically dominant nationality.

Officially, the Soviet government liquidated the labor army during the winter of 1945–1946. The NKVD, however, did not actually discharge the majority of men and women from the labor army until 1948 (Malamud 1999, p. 144). The demobilization of the labor army after World War II did not bring freedom for its veterans. Instead the Stalin regime reclassified them as special settlers and attached some of them to their places of residence and work (Berdinskikh 2005, pp. 330–34). They no longer worked under camp discipline and now had the formal right to have their families come live with them. The NKVD returned other men and women released from the labor army to the areas in Siberia and Kazakhstan where they had been exiled in 1941 (Zemskov 2005, p. 95). The dismantlement of the labor army took place in stages as the Soviet government ordered the liquidation of the restricted camps zones housing mobilized Germans attached to various enterprises during late 1945 and early 1946 (Zemskov 2005, p. 127). The formal right to live with their families granted to former labor army members still required each individual worker to receive permission from the relevant NKVD special commandant. Often the commandants did not grant this permission and the families remained divided (Krieger 2008b, p. 156). The former labor army conscripts now officially became special settlers and remained bound by the legislation restricting the rights of this group.

Release from the Special Settlement Restrictions and Partial Rehabilitation

The first massive removal of ethnic Germans from the special settlement registers took place on 5 July 1954. On this day, the Council of Ministers ordered the release of all children under 16 from the special settlement restrictions. Out of 875,795 such children 409,332, nearly half, consisted of ethnic Germans (Zemskov 2005, pp. 259–260; Bugai and Kotsonis 1999, pp. 121–3). On 13 August 1954, the Council of Ministers removed the 105,869 ethnic German special settlers who had lived east of the Urals before 1941 from the registration rolls. The final mass release of ethnic Germans from the special settlement restrictions took place as a result of a decree by the Presidium of the Supreme Soviet on 13 December 1955. This decree resulted in the remaining 695,216 ethnic Germans being removed from the special settlement restrictions (Zemskov 2005, p. 256–260). The restricted internal exile of these years, however, had a long lasting effect on the residential and occupational patterns of the ethnic Germans. They remained a disproportionately rural population largely confined to Kazakhstan, Siberia and Central Asia and employed in agriculture, coal mining and factory work.

In 1955, the removal of the special settlement restrictions did not bring full national equality to the ethnic Germans in the USSR. The decree specifically

prohibited the ethnic Germans from returning to the places from which the NKVD had deported them. It also barred them from seeking compensation for property lost as a result of the deportations. Finally, it did not annul the false accusations of mass treason made by the Stalin regime against the entire group (Alieva 1993, vol. i, p. 245). On 29 August 1964, the Soviet government finally issued a decree lifting the collective accusation of treason from the ethnic Germans. But this decree did nothing else. The prohibition on returning to their former homes still remained and the 1964 rehabilitation decree noted that the German population of the USSR had become 'rooted' in their new places of settlement. Significantly the decree stressed the economic importance of the ethnic Germans to Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan and Uzbekistan (Alieva 1993, vol. i, pp. 246–7). The wholesale ban on the ethnic Germans returning to their previous areas of settlement retained the force of Soviet law until 3 November 1972 (Alieva 1993, vol. i, pp. 247–8). Only at this time did ethnic Germans receive formal legal equality with other Soviet citizens regarding their ability to choose their place of residency in the USSR. In fact, this geographic segregation still largely continued after 1973 due to individual denials of residency permits, but the official blanket ban on ethnic Germans as a nationality from living in western regions of the USSR had been lifted.

Occupational segregation also continued largely as a result of discrimination against ethnic Germans in the admission to institutions of higher education in the Soviet era. The ethnic Germans went from being one of the most educated nationalities in the USSR in 1926 to one of the least by the time the Soviet Union collapsed (Krieger 2006a, pp. 257–262). By 1989, 12.5% of all Soviet citizens had some higher education compared to only 5.7% of ethnic Germans in Kazakhstan and 5.5% of ethnic Germans in Omsk Oblast (Krieger 2006a, pp. 261–2). In the decades following the deportation, very few ethnic Germans in the USSR managed to acquire jobs related to engineering, medicine, law, journalism, science, the arts, government, or higher education. Instead, their lack of education meant that the manager of a collective or state farm was generally the highest position an ethnic German in the USSR could realistically aspire to attain. This continued discrimination and its broader effects are the legacy of anti-German policies that reached their zenith during the Stalin years.

The German National Movement in the USSR

The Soviet policies of long term discrimination against its citizens of German descent spurred two movements among members of the group aimed at securing equal treatment. The first movement from 1964 to 1967 sought to restore the Volga German ASSR and the institutions and rights ethnic Germans enjoyed in this territory before 1941. This movement organized three delegations to Moscow to present their requests (Case K-I-43, 1974 Estonian SSR Supreme Court). This movement ultimately failed to make any headway with the Soviet government. The Volga Germans along with the Crimean Tatars were the only two deported people to possess a national territory before World War II that was never restored by the Soviet government (Polian 2004, p. 201). Instead the Soviet government attempted to integrate the ethnic Germans into the local economies of Siberia, Kazakhstan, and Central Asia as a permanent and geographically dispersed work force. They continued to be classified

and discriminated against as ethnic Germans at the same time the Soviet government prevented them from fully developing their national culture. This dual policy led to another more successful political movement among ethnic Germans in the USSR during the 1970s.

Starting in 1973, this movement aimed at securing the right of emigration to West Germany. This movement became active in the Baltics, Kazakhstan, Central Asia, Altai, Siberia, the Urals, and Moldavia. On 18 May 1973, Viktor Trenkenschuh along with 15 other ethnic German activists from Estonia, Latvia, Kazakhstan, Tajikistan, and Uzbekistan presented Moscow with a petition of 35,000 signatures from ethnic Germans seeking the right to emigrate from the USSR to West Germany. The Soviet authorities refused to entertain the request and forcibly returned them to their various places of residency, but the movement continued to agitate for the right to emigrate from the USSR to West Germany. In the years 1973–1974, it was particularly active in Estonia. German activists in this small Baltic country organized a number of meetings to discuss emigration from the USSR to Germany including one in Rapla on 24 September 1973 with 52 participants and one in Jogevea on 14 October 1973. Later German activists in Estonia organized a demonstration of 27 people in Moscow on 2 February 1974 and a much larger demonstration in Tallinn on 17 February 1974 demanding the right to settle in West Germany (Case K-I-43, 1974 Estonian SSR Supreme Court). This activism reflected a desire to be among ‘fellow Germans’ in Germany surrounded by German culture. But, the ethnic Germans in the USSR had a very Soviet and thus primordial understanding of the concepts of Germaness and culture. They had internalized a racialized idea of what it meant to be German from their experience of living under Soviet rule.

The stenographic notes from the meetings in Rapla and Jogevea give us a glimpse into the internal discussions held by German emigration activists. The desire to return to their ‘historic homeland of the FRG’ expressed on many of the signs at the Moscow demonstration had been articulated and explained earlier in these meetings (Case K-I-43, 1974 Estonian SSR Supreme Court). The choice of words is interesting. As individuals they were not asking to ‘return’ anywhere. They had lived their entire life in the Soviet Union and had never even visited Germany. Their families had settled in the Russian Empire generations ago. At that time there were no political states with the word German in their title. The Federal Republic of Germany came into existence only in 1949. Yet they explicitly denoted this state as their historic homeland, one they wished to live in because they felt that they had a special connection to it by virtue of the fact that they identified themselves as Germans.

But, what was this identification based upon? It appears to have largely been a recognition and even pride in the fact that their ancestors spoke German and maintained German cultural traditions even as they had largely been acculturated into a Russian speaking Soviet culture. The ethnic Germans in the USSR were acutely aware of their German ancestry as a result of Soviet policies requiring it be listed on their identification and other documents. Discrimination against individuals on this basis regarding residency, admission to higher education, and even access to certain jobs further reinforced the sense of feeling ‘German.’ Continued anti-German sentiment expressed in the form of ethnic slurs continued to be prevalent in the USSR during the 1970s. The ethnic Germans correctly viewed themselves as innocent of the crimes of the Nazis, but were still wrongly associated with Hitler by many other

Soviet citizens (Case K-I-43, 1974 Estonian SSR Supreme Court). Yet German culture in the USSR, particularly the ability to speak German had seriously deteriorated in the years since 1941. The emigration activists viewed themselves as German in essence with a primordial tie to the West German state, despite speaking Russian as their primary language and living a daily culture much like other Soviet citizens. In fact many ethnic Germans often felt ‘deprived’ of their true identity in this failure to communicate proficiently in their ‘mother tongue.’

The meetings in Rapla, Jogeva, and other places were conducted entirely in Russian rather than German. Most of the population born after 1941 had a poor command of German compared to Russian. The loss of German language and culture by the population and the prospect of total assimilation was one of the primary reasons given for their desire to go to Germany (Case K-I-43, 1974 Estonian SSR Supreme Court). The advanced state of acculturation into a Russian dominated Soviet culture combined with a strong psychological identification of being German led them to a state of crisis. They did not question their German identification, but instead accepted it as a given that they were German in their essence and therefore should speak German, learn German national traditions, and live in an environment of German culture. Since there was nowhere in the USSR they could do this they demanded to be allowed to leave for West Germany where such conditions did exist. They assumed that as Germans they would automatically learn the German language and acquire the German culture once they lived among other Germans in Germany. In the years since the mass exodus of ethnic Germans to the USSR to Germany, this last assumption has proven to be highly problematic.

Conclusion

The Stalin regime imposed a system of racialized ethnic segregation upon a number of nationalities deported from their homelands in the western parts of the USSR to areas east of the Urals. The physical, legal, and social segregation of these internal forced migrants resulted in the creation of different classes of citizenship within the Soviet Union. In addition to fully recognized Soviet citizens, there existed millions of second-class citizens legally classified as special settlers. During the 1940s, almost the entire population of eight different nationalities had been branded as special settlers. The largest of these nationalities consisted of ethnic Germans. They suffered from a number of legal disabilities including severe restrictions on their freedom of movement, residency, education and employment. Besides the special settlement restrictions, the Stalin regime also mobilized most of the able bodied adult population of the ethnic Germans into the forced labor detachments of the labor army. Here most of them lived and worked under conditions similar to those of GULag prisoners. The severe restrictions on the civil rights of citizens based upon their ancestry in the USSR during the 1940s and 1950s clearly established the USSR as a regime practicing racial discrimination. This experience of persecution due to their German ancestry has had long-term negative social and cultural affects upon the group. Their relative education level and social status in the USSR declined. They became the least educated and poorest European nationality in the Soviet Union as a result of the deportation. Their knowledge of the ancestral language also declined significantly

after their forced dispersal and the loss of German language schools. Yet despite considerable acculturation into a larger Russian dominated Soviet culture, continued discrimination against them as Germans politically alienated them from the state and society of the USSR. This alienation fueled an emigration movement to leave the Soviet Union and settle in West Germany, a country they felt represented their historical homeland due to a psychological attachment born out of this alienation.

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Case K-I-43, 1974 Estonian SSR Supreme Court

Interviews with elderly family members of Ethnic Germans conducted in Kant, Kyrgyz Republic on 14 November 2010 by Gulzara Hayytmuradova, Aziz Khamraev, J. Otto Pohl, and Osman Seyitnazarov.

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